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THE REVELATION OF S. JOHN

A LECTURE INTRODUCTORY
TO THE STUDY OF THE BOOK

WITH

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK

AND

SOME ACCOUNT OF ITS NUMBER SYMBOLS

BY

LUCIUS WATERMAN, D. D.

HANOVER, N. H.

1915

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Dept. of Natural Science
May 12, 1904



FOREWORD

The history of this Lecture will explain how the author of these pages was persuaded to overcome an almost insuperable diffidence and finally permit them to be printed.

Twenty-five years ago a course of Instructions upon the Book of Revelation was given at All Saints' Church, Littleton, New Hampshire. A young newspaper reporter drove himself (from a rather stern sense of duty) to attend the first of the series. After that first venture, although attendance at subsequent instructions was only possible by a peculiar sacrifice, not one in the series was missed.

For years the fascinated auditor has begged that the course be expanded into a series of Lectures and printed for general use. When himself rector of a parish, he secured Dr. Waterman for his people, and this Introductory Lecture (which already had been given at S. Paul's Church, Concord, New Hampshire) was delivered. When to the reiterated petition of the former years there was added the request of one hundred of the parish, the weight of desire was sufficient to induce the lecturer to consent to publication.

This introduction to the Book of Revelation will be a disappointment to many—because it is only an Introduction. Financial reasons do not permit a request that Dr. Waterman complete the studies thus introduced, but the price of this pamphlet is placed at a low figure in the hope that many will show a desire to have the Book of Revelation commented upon by such a scholar

and careful student as is Dr. Waterman. If the reader of these lines will do all he can to extend the reading and sale of this Introductory Lecture, a more extended series may be asked for.

One of the dreams of youth is beginning to be realized by this publication. My earnest prayer is, that it may soon be realized fully.

BRIAN C. ROBERTS,
S. Mark's Church, Augusta, Maine.

Easter Monday, 1915.

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LECTURE

The Bible is meant to supply every part of a man's spiritual nature with something to feed upon. There are books that supply the intellect, books that supply the feelings, books that move the will,—here is a book that supplies the *imagination*. God does not expect us to understand it all. It is not addressed to our understanding primarily. Any understanding of it that we may be able, by God's help, to acquire, is so much to be thankful for. But if you cannot understand it at all, it can do you good. Fill your imagination with its pictures, and you will have an enrichment, even though your intellect cannot explain the values of your own wealth. God knew that men would always find much difficulty in understanding this book, and would be tempted to make that fact an excuse for not using it. See, then, what God caused to be written here for our admonition. This is the only book of Holy Scripture that contains a special promise of blessing to the man who reads it aloud and to those who hear him (i, 3). It is the only book of the Holy Scripture that contains a solemn warning of divine punishment falling on any one who ventures to change its mysterious pictures either by adding anything or by taking anything away (xxii, 18-19). It is a book that Almighty God cares a great deal about, whether you care about it or not, and He has taken pains to show you that He cares. The book was given to the Church evidently to bring comfort and encouragement to Christians suffering a peculiar trial. In the end of the first Christian century Christians were few. It did not look as if the Church could live. The governing powers of the Roman Empire seemed to have made up their minds that this

movement must be crushed. Things looked as if it would be. Some Churches had seen their dearest and best taken from them by martyrdom. Any Church, any individual Christian, was liable to suffer such an agony at any time. Faith must certainly have been shaken. What did God mean to do? This book is a divine answer. Its title might be said to be "The Conflict of Good and Evil, as It Appears to Almighty God." It is called a "Revelation," an "Unveiling," as taking off the veil that hides two things,—(1) the real meaning of the Church's conflict in this present time, and (2) the way in which the conflict is coming out at last.

It is a revelation given to S. John, the Apostle and Evangelist, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," while he was himself suffering persecution from the Roman government, as an exile and a slave, working in the mines of the little island of Patmos in the Aegean sea. It is the fashion in these days, even with good Christians in the world of scholarship, to represent S. John as not really having any visions or revelations at all, but just writing a book out of his own head, to comfort the Christians of his day, and casting it in this form for literary effect, just as John Bunyan wrote his "Pilgrim's Progress," and then said that he saw all this in a dream. Personally, I have no sympathy with that suggestion. I believe that S. John really saw and heard in visions what he says he saw and heard. S. Irenaeus, who wrote a book somewhere about eighty years after S. John's death, and who was a pupil of a pupil of S. John, says, "*It was seen* quite lately in the days of Domitian." I make no doubt, that all these visions were really things seen. On the other hand, I can feel that God, giving S. John a series of visions, would have to make His pictures out of materials already familiar to S. John's mind. We

shall get help to understanding the pictures sometimes by saying, "S. John would have been familiar with this or that." But we must take that as meaning, "Such is the kind of picture that S. John could begin to understand," *not* "Such is the picture that S. John would make out of his own head."

I want here to fasten upon your minds two ideas, which are at the bottom of all right interpretation of this book written in the language of signs.

The first thing is that this book is a picture gallery, with eight rooms in it, and S. John, who guides you through the rooms, will say a few words before you enter the first room, and again a few words after you come out from the last room.

The second thing is that the pictures in some of the rooms begin with the conditions of the Church in S. John's day, and the pictures in some of the rooms begin in a time that is *still in the future, even to us*, but the pictures in every room take you up to the Day of Judgment or to the time following the Judgment. Even in the first room, with the letters to the seven Churches, you find the repeated promise, "To him that overcometh will I give." That giving is a part of our Lord's action in the Judgment Day, and brings that Day into the pictures, even of the first room.

I will add a third point, interesting, but less important for you to notice, that the subject of the pictures in every room, after the first, is suggested by something that was shown you in the room before.

The Introduction, the first eight verses, gives a title for the book (verses 1-3) and then presents the earthly author giving a salutation to the suffering Church in the name of God. That salutation must be noted as we pass. First, there is a deliberate piece of bad grammar in it, "Grace

and peace," so we ought to read, "From He that is, and that was, and that is coming." The meaning is that this is a message from God the unchangeable, who will not submit *even His Name* to the laws of earthly movements, and who is not only eternal ("One that is to come") but actually "coming," in His own time, to bring His eternity to bear upon this poor, disordered world. "And from the seven Spirits, that are before His Throne." The name of the Holy Spirit means "The Holy Breath." These seven Breaths, then, must plainly be seven breathings of the Breath of God. The greeting is from the Father and from the Holy Spirit and from the Son, and the Church is reminded that the Holy Breath has seven special gifts to give to His faithful people, even as Isaiah had prophesied of them (Is. xi: 2, 3), and as the prayer in our Confirmation Office tells them over. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the Faithful Witness, and the First Begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth." The unusual order, "Father, Spirit, Son," is accounted for by the writer's desire to give this long description of our Lord, and make a climax of it. He is "the Faithful Witness." He cannot have deceived us in His promises that His Church shall not die. He is "the First Begotten of the dead." He has been persecuted and slain Himself, but He is simply the Leader of a long array of brothers and sisters of His, who shall rise into glory like His own. He is "the Prince of the Kings of the earth." Even now He has all power, and He holds our persecutors in the hollow of His hand.

I. With verse 9 S. John begins to give us an account of his first vision, lasting to the end of Chapter 3. Our Lord appeared to him in glorious majesty, with the long white robe of a High Priest, with a great voice like the sound of a thundering waterfall, but with the white hair

of venerable wisdom, with a girdle of gold placed, not about His waist as if to prepare Him for some active work, but breast high, as no one would wear flowing robes if he had any active work to do. Our Lord was thus shown as all-glorious and powerful, but resting serenely, not discerning in the mad struggle of this world, anything for which He should, as we say, "turn His hand over." But He is not unmindful of His persecuted Church. He is walking in the midst of seven lamp-stands, all of gold, and He holds on the palm of His outstretched hand seven stars. The lamp-stands, He tells the seer, are the seven Churches, what we should call the seven *Dioceses*, of the Roman province of Asia (just as we have in New England seven Dioceses, which are the seven Churches of New England), and the seven stars are the Angels (which is His loving word, I am sure, for the *Bishops*) of the seven Churches. Our Lord illustrates His loving care for the whole Church by sending to every Diocese among this representative group of seven a special message.

II. The second vision fills Chapters 4-7, and the first verse of Chapter 8. It is a vision of the worship of God, and of the course of God's providences. In it the imagery of the Temple at Jerusalem is taken for a starting point. We must remember that it is not an attempt to show what Heaven looks like. It is a symbolic picture, not a literal picture. But S. John's symbol of Heaven was something more or less like the Temple, only with its rooms open to view, and with a Throne and a blaze of glory where the Mercy-Seat would have been in the Most Holy Place. The Holy Spirit is suggested in the symbolism by seven Lamps of Fire burning before the Throne. A Lamb showing the marks of having passed through death represents our Lord making His perpetual offering of Himself. The twenty-four Elders,—a double

twelve, you observe,—stand for the worship of the Jewish Church and the Christian Church, united into one. The four living creatures, the Cherubim, are so great a subject that I cannot even touch it now.*

The book that no one in the universe but the slain Lamb can open, is plainly the story of man's redemption. The seven seals to be opened are forces which must do their work, or things which must happen, before that story can be laid open, all completed and ready for the world to see. The opening of the first seal shows a great Conqueror going forth to war. That is our Lord Himself, entering into the world through His Incarnation. That is a very glorious providence, but it has to be accompanied by providences of suffering and sorrow. The second seal shows us the forces of war, for our Lord did not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword. The third seal exhibits the action of scarcity *groaning in the presence of luxury*. For here three measures of coarse barley meal, the amount that would support a small family for a day, are to be sold at the price of one day's work of one man, and yet the oil and

*The subject of the Cherubim is nobly treated in a book less known than it deserves to be, Rev. Patrick Fairbairn's "Typology of Scripture." Briefly, it may be said that they are symbolic figures in the form of men crowned with the heads of "the four excellent creatures,"—the man, the lion, the ox, and the eagle. They seem to serve as a prophecy in symbol that fallen man shall be restored to the full fellowship and perfect service of God, and shall then be crowned with all the best excellencies of all God's creation, with the brain and heart and conscience and the spiritual capacity of man, with the strength and majesty of the lion, with the patient usefulness of the ox, and with the aspiration, ambition, and reach of the eagle. Any symbol of perfect manhood must of course be eminently a symbol of the manhood of our Lord, and hence the association of the Cherubim symbols with the writers of the four-fold life of our Lord in the Gospels is most appropriate.

wine, the luxuries of the rich, are to be left uninterfered with. The fourth seal shows us Death gathering his harvest in every field, and bringing cruel agencies of sword and famine and pestilence and wild beasts to deepen tragedy. It is a sorrowful picture, but it is shown that these forces are part of the plan of God, and at any rate they lead to the opening up of the story of God's final success in saving His world. As each of these seals is opened, one of the living creatures cries aloud, "Come." It is not "Come and see," as you will find it in our King James version. It is not an invitation to the seer to take a closer look. It is the cry of the groaning universe, of humanity waiting for its deliverance, calling for the Second Coming, the full and final Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. That Coming, and the fact that in it alone is found the end of all the world's sins, pains, and griefs, is the great subject of this book.

At verse 9 of Chapter 6 the subject changes. S. John is standing in the heavenly places, but the first four seals have given him visions of forces acting in this lower world. The opening of the fifth seal tells him something about the other world. He is here shown how God's good providence deals with the dead. I have noted that his vision of Heaven starts from a representation of the Temple. In the outer room of the Temple was the golden Altar of Incense. It is repeated here. Then the place assigned to the martyrs, whose tragic deaths had so sorely wounded the Church's heart, and shaken the Church's faith, is found to be "*under the Altar*," not in the Temple of God's fully manifested glory, but in a basement room below. Does any reader of these lines remember the Huguenot chapel in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral? *There* is an analogous case,—a place of worship for a separate company *beneath* the great gathering place of

the worshippers in a great Church. Perhaps we may think that those souls of the martyrs could see into the Heavenly Temple and hear its songs. Certainly their own prayers were presented at the Incense Altar, as we shall see later, and had great answering. Meanwhile, we are to observe three things revealed to us concerning the state of the blessed dead: First, they have not come to the fulness of glory and joy, being, indeed, not yet "in Heaven," in the supreme sense of that phrase, but are in a state of *waiting*. They are waiting for the resurrection to give them that bodily life for which our nature is made, and they are waiting ("How long wilt Thou not judge and avenge our blood?") for the setting up of God's final Kingdom of consummated justice and right, and of a perfect social order. The second point is that they are very actively engaged in prayer. S. Paul's phrase about "them that *sleep* in Jesus" certainly needs to be pressed to-day on those who dream that good people, when they die, go at once to final glory. But this vision, on the other hand, shows us that the mental action of these sleeping saints is very eager and constant, and is a great power. The third point is that the faithful dead have "white robes" given them during their waiting-time. "White robes" in this book are a symbol of holiness. The book itself tells us *that* in Chapter 19,— "The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Then the giving of white robes must mean the making of righteous character. In fact, while we disown a certain unfortunate doctrine of Purgatory, we must open our eyes to a plain teaching of *purgation* in the other world, even for martyr-saints. Modern Christians need to be admonished severely, that the notion that death is a supremely powerful sacrament, and makes every second rate, or third rate, Christian into a great saint in a moment of time, is "a fond thing,

vainly invented, and . . . repugnant to the word of God.”

With the 12th verse of the sixth chapter we come to the opening of the sixth seal, and here the particular providence disclosed is that of the immediate preparations for the bringing in of the Day of Judgment. I cannot stop to attempt any interpretation of these signs of blackened sun and falling stars and removing heaven and shaken earth. Whatever they mean, they are our Lord's promised signs that His Coming is close at hand. The opening of the seventh seal in verse 1 of Chapter 8 will bring us to that great end itself. Meanwhile we have in Chapter 7 two visions which I may call *episodes*. Both are intended to comfort the heart of the persecuted Church by showing how perfectly the Church will be taken care of and preserved through all its trials.

In the first of these two visions the Church of the saved is represented as the Israel of God, organized in its twelve tribes. Just as the terrors of the Day of Judgment are coming on, the angels of God seal every member of God's Kingdom in his forehead to mark him for safety. The Church-number, 12, is repeated with tremendous emphasis,—twelve thousand sealed from each of the twelve tribes. Of course, it does not mean that *that* is the number of God's saved people, but it does mean that God's plan of salvation is an orderly plan, and a definite plan, and a plan that does not admit of one solitary failure at any point. Then the second vision shows us the great company of the saved, “a multitude that no man can number,” in their gratitude and joy and praise. With the opening of the seventh seal comes the end, but there is here no description of the end as yet, only we are told that “there was a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.” “A half hour that is the beginning of

an eternal rest," says an ancient commentator. I think he has the right idea. S. John had been seeing a vision that said that even under God's own guidance and protection the Church and the world must go through many distresses and conflicts to God's salvation. This half hour of silence is a most expressive symbol of the bringing of all such things to an utter end. As Mrs. Browning says in her great poem,—“He giveth His beloved sleep,”

“O earth, so full of dreary noises,
O men with wailing in your voices,
O strife, O curse, . . .
God strikes a silence through you all.”

God's providences must lead us by a hard way, but they will surely lead us into a perfect peace. That “half hour,” then, is not a time that ends. We go so far into eternity, and then while eternity goes on, *we* come back to the first Christian century once more, and begin all over again to follow the plans of God, looking at them now from a new point of view.

III. The prayer of the martyrs in the sixth chapter besought God not only to make the world go right, but to punish the world for its wilful wrong-doing. “How long will Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” The third room in our gallery is occupied with the vision of the seven trumpets, showing how those prayers are answered in Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11. First, in verses 2-5 of Chapter 8, we see an angel offering those prayers of God's people, with *much incense added to them*, at the golden Altar of Incense before the Throne. (Rid yourselves of the idea that incense is a symbol of prayer. It is expressly a symbol of something that has to be added to all human prayers, and that is the “sweet savour” of the merits and intercessions of our

Lord Jesus Christ. "Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense," means "Let my prayer be as acceptable as the offering of sweet odors." It does *not* mean that my prayer is a sweet odor in itself, or that sweet odors are symbols of prayer. Incense stands for the whole Self-offering of our Lord, supremely acceptable, and covering, in prayers or anything else, the unacceptableness of *our* offering.) Then the angel fills his censer with fire from the Altar and casts it—that is, the fire, the hot coals,—down upon the earth. "Let hot burning coals fall upon them," is the thought. Then in verses 6–12, you are shown how wilful sin spoils all life for wilful sinners. Four trumpets sound one after another, and you see, in successive illustrations, how sin destroys the value of the world's good things. Agriculture, commerce, refreshment, the light of wholesome knowledge, are taken in turn. The punishment of sin is that it wipes out a considerable part,—we must not stick at a literal "one third part,"—of the value of every good gift of God's creation. In verse 13 an angel crying "woe" proclaims that something worse is coming. Just as we had four seals to cover God's providences in this world's life, and then with the fifth seal turned to the world of spirits, so here four trumpets, the *world-number*, show us this law of God acting on our world which we know, and then we have in the first 12 verses of Chapter 9 a revelation of a great spiritual force, but this time a host of *evil* spirits, allowed to work havoc and distress among men. The star falling from heaven and receiving power to open the pit of the abyss and call out tormentors like a locust-plague is certainly Satan. I must not try to expound this singularly mysterious and unintelligible picture, more than to say that following the analogy of the fifth seal, I believe that the plagues of the fifth trumpet are

distresses which men who have given themselves to do evil rather than good are really suffering now in the invisible world. On the analogy of the sixth seal again, I feel safe in setting it down that the vision of the sixth trumpet refers to a tremendous climax of evil-doing, on the one hand, and of suffering on the other hand, with alas! fearful hardening of the heart of wilful offenders against all God's lessons of experience, which will characterize the closing days of this world's probation, just before the final Judgment. The seventh trumpet, as will be seen plainly from Chapter 11, verses 15-19, ushers in (even as the seventh seal ushered in) the Judgment itself, and the final victory of right.

But we must pause to notice here between the sixth and seventh trumpets, as between the sixth and seventh seals, two episodic visions. The first of the episodes fills Chapter 10. The second fills fourteen verses of Chapter 11. To throw a little light on Chapter 10, I would remind you that in the visions of the trumpets we see God punishing the lost. The Church of the saved had to be led through a discipline of pain and trial and had to be assured in the episodic visions of the seal group that God would not fail in His great final purpose after all. Similarly, the Church sees that in this riot of permitted evil God's people also must suffer many things. Now come visions of reassurance. We have in the picture of the sixth trumpet evil rising to a climax, punishment rising to a climax, defiant hardness of impenitence rising to a climax, in turn. Now appears a mighty angel, with the rainbow of hope and promise about his head, with a face as the sun, and with feet like pillars of fire, and he brings, as you might expect, a great message bearing on this terrible situation. I take it to be a message concerning the final outcome of moral evil. That message is not

given us to know. It was *uttered*, with singular solemnity. S. John heard it, and could have written it, or at least he thought he could. He was just essaying to write it down, when he was told, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them *not*." What God had to say on the subject was something which the Church was not yet fit to hear. It was not, then, what the Church was already in the habit of thinking. It was some great corrective of the Church's habitual thought, which yet would have been so misunderstood and misrepresented that God could not allow the Church to hear it then. But the angel did go on to a great message of comfort that the Church *might* hear, swearing solemnly that this condition of permitted evil shall not go on for always. The seventh angel shall sound his trumpet—God knows when,—and when God's time is come there shall be no more delay. And yet the Church is warned again that God's people must share in the agony of the waiting-time. The seer was given a parchment roll and told to eat it. It was sweet in his mouth. The revelation of God is a joy and comfort to every man who truly receives it. But when the seer came to digest his roll, it was bitter within him. So it must always be. If we lay God's word to heart, His message will bring us some bitternesses which by disloyalty we could easily escape.

The other episode is very hard to understand, and I must say very much about it, or very, very little. I must choose the very little. Under the figure of measuring the Temple, with its two rooms, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and leaving the outer court to be trampled by the profane, God promises special protection to His faithful people during the special horrors of the intensified evil of the very last days. Whatever all this about the two witnesses may mean, I believe it to be

something of the future and *not* a picture symbolizing any present facts. But this episode introduces a new figure, "the beast that cometh up out of the abyss," and now we are called to move on into the fourth room and to see a vision of the trials of the Church in conflict with that evil power. There have been sundry suggestions given to us in the room of the trumpet-visions that the forces of evil are under a personal leadership. Now we shall be occupied particularly with the development of that idea,—that the conflict of good and evil in the world is a conflict between two persons, Jesus Christ and the fallen archangel, Satan.

IV. This new vision opens with the beginning of the twelfth chapter, and goes through the fourteenth. The woman arrayed with the sun and crowned with twelve stars is the Church of God. The child of which she is delivered is the promised Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God, who is caught away out of this world to God's throne.

The mysterious passage about war in heaven seems to imply that when our Lord entered upon His Heavenly Priesthood at His Ascension into Heaven, there was some serious curtailment of the power of Satan and the fallen angels, compared with that freedom which God had given them aforetime, and certainly the casting down of the dragon to the earth suggest our Lord's words to the Apostles, "I beheld Satan, as lightning, fallen from Heaven," and also the star fallen from heaven seen at the blowing of the sixth trumpet in the preceding vision-group. The flood of waters which the dragon casts out of his mouth represents such social movements as (to name some very different ones) the persecution of the Church by the Roman emperors down to Diocletian, and then again the barbarian invasion of Europe, which brought on the darkness of the Dark Ages. The forces

which make for peace and good order and solidity in social life prevailed every time over the forces that make for quarrel and strife and disintegration. The earth swallowed up the flood. It will swallow up any flood of overwhelming adversaries that Satan may bring against the Church. He must devise a more subtle scheme.

In Chapter 13 that scheme is unfolded. The dragon calls up two beasts, one out of the sea, another out of the earth. The sea is the symbol of the human forces in their natural state, the raw material of humanity. Daniel saw successive empires emerging from that welter of ungoverned waves. Doubtless, S. John felt that this beast out of the sea was the Roman empire of his day. But *we* must give the symbol a wider meaning. It stands for godless and selfish power supported by the undisciplined masses of mankind in any age. It may be an empire. It may be a mob. It is like the dragon, for it is the embodiment of selfishness, which is the central ungodliness. This beast proclaims to men that they *must be* selfish. And it is quite true that selfishness largely governs this world. Every one will fall under the power of it who is not enrolled in the book of life of the Lamb, who represents eternal self-sacrifice. One of its heads has received a deadly wound. That means that in our Lord's death upon the Cross selfishness has received its death-blow. Already our Lord has "destroyed him that had the power over death, that is, the devil." Yet the devil, along with his great ally and instrument, human selfishness, has revived, and goes on his course as if nothing had happened. And here is a solemn warning in verses 9-10: "Listen well to this. If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goeth." That is, if a man is destined to hardship (in God's high plan) he will come to hardship. Bowing down to selfishness will not save him

from God's ordering of his life. And if a man fights with the weapons of selfishness, slaying with the sword of human meanness, by that sword he will sooner or later be pierced through. He may have an outward success. He will be in reality a soured, disappointed man. "Here is the steadfastness and faith of the saints."

The second beast comes out of the *earth* (verse 11). The earth stands for the human forces organized, disciplined, made productive, clothed with beauty. It is human nature subjected to civilization, education, culture. Culture looks very much like salvation. A godless, selfish culture will look very much like the Lamb of God, but it will have the horns of the dragon, and the character of the dragon, and it will do the dragon's work. Later in this book it is called the false prophet. In S. John's day it was partly the heathen priesthood, and partly the philosophy of the schools, not guided by the revelation of the faith of Jesus. To-day it is the force which professes to teach men what is right, and what makes for progress, and teaches them falsely. It is godless and selfish culture and education. It is a false public opinion. The first beast proclaimed selfishness as *necessary*. The second beast teaches that selfishness is a *duty*. This selfish wisdom works the miracles of modern science, invention, discovery, and in the power of them demands that all men shall follow its teaching as certain truth. To sum up this whole vision of the second beast, it means a godless culture, teaching men that the world's true salvation lies in a refined and educated selfishness, *i. e.*, in the worship of all that the first beast more crudely represents. "The number of the beast," mentioned in verse 18, must be, I think, the number of the name of some person who will appear in the last days as a leader of ungodliness, in fact, the con-

summate Anti-Christ. It will be observed that his number, 666, is a curious parody of the number of the name of Jesus, which is 888. It is quite remarkable, by the way, how much this book is a book of the conflict of Divine powers and the *parodies* of Divine powers. I cannot pursue this subject here.

In Chapter 14 we come again to the time of the end, and see the Lamb victorious over His foes, rejoicing in the midst of His saved people. I must pass very lightly over this chapter, only noting that in verse 8 we hear of the fall of the persecuting city Babylon, which introduces a new subject to be taken up by and by, that is, in our sixth room, and again that in verses 14-20 we have the consummation of good and evil forces represented as a *harvest* to be *reaped* and a *vintage* to be *trodden*, respectively. (I cannot help remarking as I pass, that there is a suggestiveness in the fact that even the punishment of the evil is here represented not as an annihilation, nor as a casting out as waste material, but as an act which produces transformation into a rich result in God's good time. Perhaps I misread the picture. But I cannot read it in any other way with my present mind.) I add that this chapter contains a vision of the last things, but it seems to me that verse 13 is to be taken as a sort of parenthesis. The seer has a vision of the final blessedness of God's people and then a voice from Heaven tells him to write down *this* as a present lesson from that revelation of joy and triumph, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from this time all through the ages, for they are on their way to this great end at last."

V. I must pass lightly over Chapters 15 and 16 also, in which we pass through the fifth room of our gallery of visions. It takes up the lesson of the trumpet-visions, that sin brings pain and punishment even in this world,

and shows that that law of God will in the last days have *its* climax also, along with the ripening of good powers and evil powers for the final conflict. We must notice that it is a vision of seven bowls, not vials. "Vials of wrath" have become proverbial in our English speech, but that was a blundering translation by our fathers of three hundred years ago. The Greek word *φιάλη* means a shallow bowl. It has given us in English a word for a small, narrow-necked bottle. *This* vision, I repeat is meant to give you a picture of seven *bowls*. As with the seals and with the trumpets, the first four deal with things of this world, and the fifth touches the world of spirits, and in this case (as with the fifth trumpet) the realm of the *evil* spirits, and then the sixth ushers in the immediate preparation for the final Judgment, and the seventh the Judgment itself. *This series of pictures belongs wholly to a time still future.*

VI. But now we have heard repeated mention of great Babylon, a harlot city, at once a persecutor and a corrupter. In the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of our book, and in ten verses of Chapter 19, we have the pictures of the sixth room, setting forth the character and career of this woman who is a city. What now *is* this Babylon? We are told expressly in this book, comparing verse 9 and verse 18 of Chapter 17, that this woman is a great city that sits on seven hills, and is in fact "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." In S. John's day, then, this Babylon was certainly the city of Rome. Yet there are features about this harlot that suggest a fallen *Church*. The figure of the harlot is specially used in the Old Testament of a Church not faithful to her covenant with God. Moreover, in the parodies of this book this harlot is certainly set over against that holy Church which is also called

by the name of a city, new Jerusalem, the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And strangely, too, she appears in the wilderness, just where the Church was seen to take refuge in Chapter 12. Many Protestant commentators have found an easy way out of this difficulty. "Babylon," they say, "is Rome, first Pagan, then Papal, but always corrupting to her own associates and always persecuting toward the true followers of God." That explanation is too easy, and very much too shallow. Protestant Churches are just as liable to fall into the sin of unfaithfulness to God's covenant as Roman Churches. We must look a little deeper for the real purpose of God in this fearful symbol. What makes a city a great power for good or evil? It is the fact that a city is a representative of the social order, good or bad, in a concentrated form. The social order finds its chief embodiment in great cities. In S. John's day great Rome set the fashion for the social order of the whole civilized world. If Rome was self-indulgent and careless of God, the whole social order was self-indulgent and godless in every corner of the empire. But the social order of the world started with a covenant between God and primeval man. When the social order forgets and neglects God, that neglect is a breach of an ancient bond. It is a harlotry. We must remember that Tyre is described by the Old Testament prophets as a harlot, as well as Jerusalem and Samaria. The world is bound in an ancient covenant with God, as well as the Church. First and foremost, then, this great Babylon is any godless social order, especially as it is concentrated in great cities, like London, Paris, Berlin, or New York, to-day. And the same harlotry is found in the social order everywhere. No town so small that it does not show the same criminality on its little scale. But on the other hand, there

is a social order that is bound to God by more special ties. If anywhere, in any of its membership, the Church of God is unfaithful to God, and neglectful of Him, and grows selfish and self-indulgent, and puts unnecessary difficulties in the way of any of God's servants, oppressing them, refusing them sympathy, hating them when God loves them, then such a failure of *such* a social order is a far more awful harlotry than even that of the world. Wherever there is a church quarrel, there is the spirit of this harlot, *on both sides of the quarrel*. If Protestants and Roman Catholics hate one another, there is something of the harlot in them both. If any part of the Church uses persecution to coerce conscience, *there* is harlotry. If any part of the Church becomes selfishly luxurious, *there* is harlotry. It is quite true to say that this woman enthroned on the wild beast of human selfishness is partly the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, or (as perhaps I should rather say) the Church of Christ is partly this harlot.

In verses 7-18 of Chapter 17 an angel gives the seer some explanation of this vision. "The beast [which carries the woman] was, and is not," he says, "and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition." That is, selfishness reigned over the world, unchecked, but in our Lord's earthly life and death received a death-blow. In a sense, it was even then destroyed. As a world-sovereign it "*is not*." Yet it comes up and fights for its life, and will go on till the final victory of God annihilates it forever. The particular form which a godless social order took on in S. John's day, being that of the Roman empire, summed up in its capital city, we are told that the seven heads of the beast on which the woman sits may be taken as suggesting seven hills on which that city is built, and again those seven heads

may stand for seven kings, which seems to mean a succession of imperial governments that have dominated in their turn the whole civilization of their day. These will be (1) Egypt, (2) Assyria, (3) Babylonia, (4) Persia, (5) the kingdom of Alexander and his successors (these five are fallen), (6) Rome, which "now is" (in S. John's day), and (7) one which is not yet come. The seventh head bears ten horns which are declared to be ten kings. This may be taken to imply just what history has unrolled before us, that there would be no seventh world empire, but (instead of that) a congeries of national governments. Or it is possible to find in the institution of the papacy a seventh world empire of a sort, so making *that* the seventh head, associated with a dispersal of secular government into a group of nationalities. It is simply a question whether we are to take the seventh head with its ten horns as a seventh world empire associated with a group of national governments, or as a suggestion that instead of a world empire will spring up a group of national movements. Either interpretation is true to the facts of history. The beast himself is said to be an eighth head and of the seven. That he "is of the seven" means that the beast of godless selfishness lends his character to the governments of men, which is sadly true. That he is an eighth head would seem to hint that just in the last climax of evil all forms of government will disappear for a time, and selfishness will tyrannize over men in a condition of anarchy. And this corresponds to the strange-seeming statement that the ten kings and the beast will turn upon the harlot and make her desolate and naked and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. If the harlot represents a godless social order, how can the governing powers of the world be represented as hating and destroying her? The solemn answer is that that is

just what anarchists are already offering as a gospel. The present social experiment, they say, is an utter failure. Society as we know it, must be *destroyed*, to give humanity a chance to live its true life.

The eighteenth chapter, showing the utter destruction of Babylon, I must pass over without a word, except to say that in days when the existing social order was actively and cruelly persecuting the Church, this long chapter of exultation over great Babylon's fall must have carried a thrilling interest to Christians, which it is hard for us who do not feel much troubled by Babylon, to realize. And we need to remember, too, that though Babylon is destroyed by powers as evil as herself, yet her destruction opens the way for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, to take to Him His great power and reign, even as is set forth to us in the first ten verses of Chapter 19. The mention of this great culminating triumph of spiritual power, the triumph of all the things that the number seven symbolizes, over all the things that the number six symbolizes, leads us then most naturally out of the sixth room of our gallery into the seventh.

VII. The pictures of the seventh room begin with verse 11 of Chapter 19, and go on through Chapters 19 and 20, and eight verses of Chapter 21. Again I cannot say anything about detail. Our Lord is represented as going forth a conqueror at the head of the armies of Heaven and as accomplishing a great victory over the powers of evil. That takes us through the nineteenth chapter. Then comes an episode, in the first six verses of the twentieth chapter, which involves one of the most fiercely disputed points in this book. In the first three verses we see Satan seized and bound, and cast into a pit, and sealed up for a thousand years, that for all that time he may deceive the nations no more. In the next three

verses we see a resurrection of the martyrs and saints, in fact, of all God's people who have not worshipped the beast, nor allowed his mark to be impressed upon them. But "the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." On what I shall call the natural view of this passage, it foretells that when our Lord comes to judgment, He will first suppress all evil, and raise His faithful people from death and set up a reign of blessedness here on earth, which will last for a time here described as a thousand years, which is not likely to be a literal measure of time, and then when that period is over, the powers of evil, which had before been held in check, but not destroyed, will be allowed to rise up in one last fearful rebellion, which will be followed by their utter and final overthrow (verses 7-10), by the general resurrection and judgment (verses 11-15), and by the coming down of the new Jerusalem from Heaven into the earth; in other words, by the setting up of a perfect social order of holiness and happiness on earth, set forth in verses 1-8 of Chapter 21, and then more fully in the pictures of the eighth room (21, 9 to 22, 5, inclusive).

There is a rival interpretation of the episode in the first six verses of Chapter 20, which makes it to refer to the present dispensation. *This* is the "*thousand years.*" Satan was bound at our Lord's First Advent. The first resurrection is the resurrection of saved souls quickened to spiritual life in Christ. It is not a resurrection of those who *had not* worshipped the beast, but of those in every age who are *not going to* give way before the powers of evil. They reign for a thousand years in the sense that

during a space described as a thousand years some or other of them will always be found reigning. I must say that that seems to me to be a severely strained interpretation. But it is that of the great majority of modern interpreters. It was not the interpretation of the first two Christian centuries, but from the third century on, the majority of students have been ashamed to believe in a millennial reign of our Lord with His saints between the resurrection of the Church and the resurrection of the world. Yet I notice that S. Paul was earnestly desirous that he might attain (as he told the Philippians) "unto the resurrection *from* the dead." Now S. Paul had had a resurrection to spiritual life. To the resurrection of the dead in general he could not help coming, whether he wanted to or not. But evidently he had learned to look for a *first resurrection*, a resurrection *from* the dead, a resurrection of some particular deceased persons from among the dead in general. I cannot but understand the twentieth chapter of the Revelation to say the same.

VIII. The mention of the new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven, in the first verses of Chapter 21 leads (after the manner of this book) to another group of pictures in an eighth room of our gallery, setting forth the glory of that holy city, that new order of covenanted social life, which is also figured as the Bride of the Lamb. I cannot take time to explain any feature of it, nor to comment on the farewell words of the seer, from verses 6 of Chapter 22 to the end. Only I will direct your attention to one point which is most commonly sadly missed. In verse 17 of Chapter 22 we find these words, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come." That repeated "*Come*" is a prayer for the second coming of our Lord, His coming to put an end to sin and sorrow. That is the central idea of this

book. The Spirit and the Bride are praying for that coming perpetually. Let him that heareth join with them to swell that tide of prayer. This is no urgent calling upon sinners to come to Christ. It is calling on *Him* to come and finish His work. In the meantime, while we are waiting wearily for that promised hour, let us all have recourse to Him, the invisible Head. "And he that is athirst, let him come" to that gracious Lord of Life; "he that will, let him take of the water of life freely."

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

IT is a book of symbols, and to begin with, its very structure is founded upon a use of numbers as having a symbolic meaning.

In a religious use, to those who have received the revelation of God as Triune,

3 is the number that most naturally suggests God.

Then to one who considers how human beings look four ways, forward and back, and right and left, and how human instinct speaks of "the four quarters of the earth," and "the four winds of heaven," entirely regarding this world as a four-way place,

4 is the number of the world of men.

In Old Testament times men could see no reason why 3 should be a number standing for the idea of God particularly, but even in Old Testament times God stamped the two following combinations of 3 and 4 as somehow markedly sacred numbers.

7 (=3+4) is a natural symbol for the idea of God wrought into union with the world, God acting upon the world.

A week of seven days is not at all a natural division of time. We may well imagine it to be a revealed division of time. At any rate it came about providentially, and associated the number 7 with religious ideas. See Ex. xxv: 31, 37, Zech. iii: 9, and Rev. iv: 5, for passages suggesting that the operations of the Holy Spirit are somehow 7-fold. Note that sometimes the number is used of an action of God upon the world, not as Sanctifier, but simply as providential Orderer of events, as in Gen. xli: 25, 26, 27, Rev. xvii: 9.

12 ($=3 \times 4$), where the 3 and 4 are not simply added together, but actually multiplied into one another, is naturally the symbol of the Church relation, the organic union of God and His people.

The number 7 may represent God acting on men from without, but 12 must stand for God acting on men and through men, as one who dwells in them and walks in them. Hence comes the providential ordering which divides Israel into 12 tribes, and that so carefully, that when Levi is taken out from the list, Joseph is divided into two, Ephraim and Manasseh. [What tribe is omitted in Rev. vii: 5-8, in order to keep the sacred 12? Compare Acts i: 21, 22, where it is urged that the number of the original apostles *must* be made 12 again, though in fact many apostles were to be added later, as S. Paul, S. Barnabas, S. Silas, S. Timothy.]

For use of 12 in this book see vii: 5-8, xii: 2, xxi: 12-21.

Depending on the significance of 7 as the number of the Sanctifier, and on the number of the week as a sacred season, we have two other symbolic numbers, 6 and 8.

6 is the number next short of seven, and so represents the world coming short of the intended result of the Divine action by which God adds Himself to His creature:

It is the number of the world without God, of man unsaved, of worldliness, of selfishness.

[Note the providential fact, providentially recorded in 2 Chron. ix: 13, that King Solomon's annual income from tributaries was 666 talents of gold, and compare the statement in this book, xiii: 18, that somehow 666 is "the number" of the great anti-Christian power.]

8 is the number of new beginning, because in our reckoning of time by weeks, every new first day is an 8th day, or conversely every 8th-day is a new first day.

So 8 comes to be the number of fresh life, of resurrection, of regeneration. It seems not accidental, but providential, that we read of "eight souls" saved in the Ark for the beginning of a new dispensation in a new world, and that the Lord Jesus Christ, having suffered the godless world to prevail against Him and put Him to death on the 6th day of the last week of His life, should then have risen from death on the 8th (or new 1st) day, to make a new beginning of life and salvation.

666 is said to be "the number of the beast" in xiii: 18.

888 is the number of the Name Jesus. This again seems rather providential than accidental.

[Note that in Hebrew and Greek every letter of the alphabet is also a number. Hence every proper name (and indeed every word) in either of those languages has its "number" made up by adding together the numerical value of all its letters. Thus the name Adam in Greek has a numerical value, $1+4+1+40=46$.]

That the Structure of the Book of Revelation is really based upon such a scheme of number-symbolism will appear from the following facts:

1. Between a brief introduction and a brief close it is made up of Eight Visions, *Seven* Visions of the conflict of Good and Evil in the world, that is, of the working out of the *Covenant Scheme* of Salvation, followed by an *Eighth* Vision of the *New Life*, which is to follow.

2. Again, the first Seven Visions are divided into two groups, of *Four* and *Three*.

(a) The first Four Visions (note the world-number, 4) are occupied with conditions of conflict which fill the whole history of the Christian Dispensation. They show in a general way how the world receives what God sends.

(b) The next Three Visions (note the God-number, 3) are occupied with conditions belonging to the last days only. [See xv: 1,—"seven plagues which are the last," R. V.] They show what God will do when His time is come to put forth His Almighty and bring in the great end without waiting any longer upon the slow response of men.

3. Beside the fact (already mentioned) that the Eighth Vision is a Vision of the New Life of the New World, it is to be noted that even among the Seven the *Sixth* Vision is a Vision of the Church corrupted by an alliance with *worldly* powers, and the *Seventh* Vision is a vision of the final Triumph of God's Saving Purpose, that is, of the union of the 3 and 4 made effective at last.

4. Finally it is to be noted that several of the visions are themselves divided into seven, and in each of these cases there is a marked subdivision of the 7 into groups of 3+4 or 4+3. Thus the messages to the 7 churches are marked off into a group of 4 and a group of 3 by the different positions of the saying, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." In the Vision of the 7 Seals, the first 4 seals introduce conditions of this world, and the last 3 things of the other world or of coming judgment. Similarly, in the vision of the 7 Trumpets, the proclamation, "Woe, woe, woe," separates the first 4 from the last 3. Again in the Vision of the 7 Bowls ("Vials" in the King James Version), the use of the prepositions "into" and "upon" (properly distinguished in the Revised Version) divides the first 3 from the last 4.

It should be added that one of the marked features of this Revelation is the exhibition of the Powers of Evil as constituting a sort of parody of the Powers of Good. Thus we have set out against the Trinity of the Godhead a Trinity of Evil, the Dragon, the First Beast, and the Second Beast, against the Lamb ($\tau\omicron\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\lambda\iota\omicron\nu$) is set the Beast ($\tau\omicron\ \theta\eta\rho\iota\omicron\nu$), and to secure this precise contrast and comparison a different word is used for Lamb from that of S. John's Gospel ($\delta\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\nu\omicron\varsigma$). Against the Bride ($\eta\ \nu\acute{\upsilon}\mu\phi\eta$) is set the Harlot ($\eta\ \pi\acute{o}\rho\eta\eta$), and as the Bride, the Holy Church, is seen fleeing for refuge into the wilderness, so it is from the wilderness that the Harlot, the corrupted Church, comes forth to rule the nations.

So also two cities are held up in contrast, the holy city, New Jerusalem, as yet invisible, but which is to last

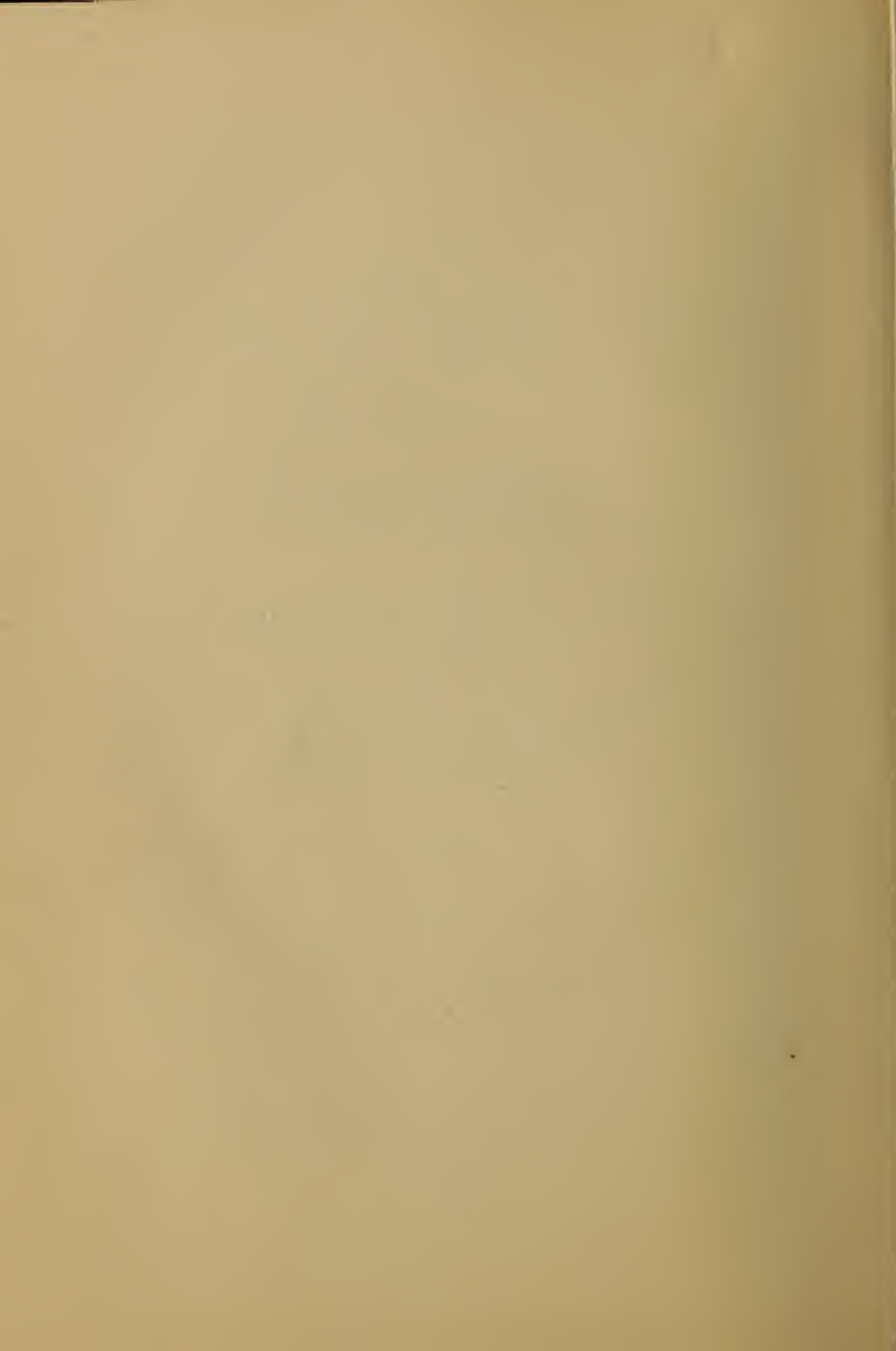
for ever, and that other City, Babylon, which makes itself felt as a present, overwhelming power, but is doomed to an irreparable destruction. And the "throne" of Satan is set against the "throne" of God in three references (ii. 13, xiii. 2, xvi. 10), in all which the King James Version unfortunately gave "seat" instead of "throne" from a miscalculated reverence, obscuring the warning which God meant to give His people as to the seriousness of the present power of evil in the world.

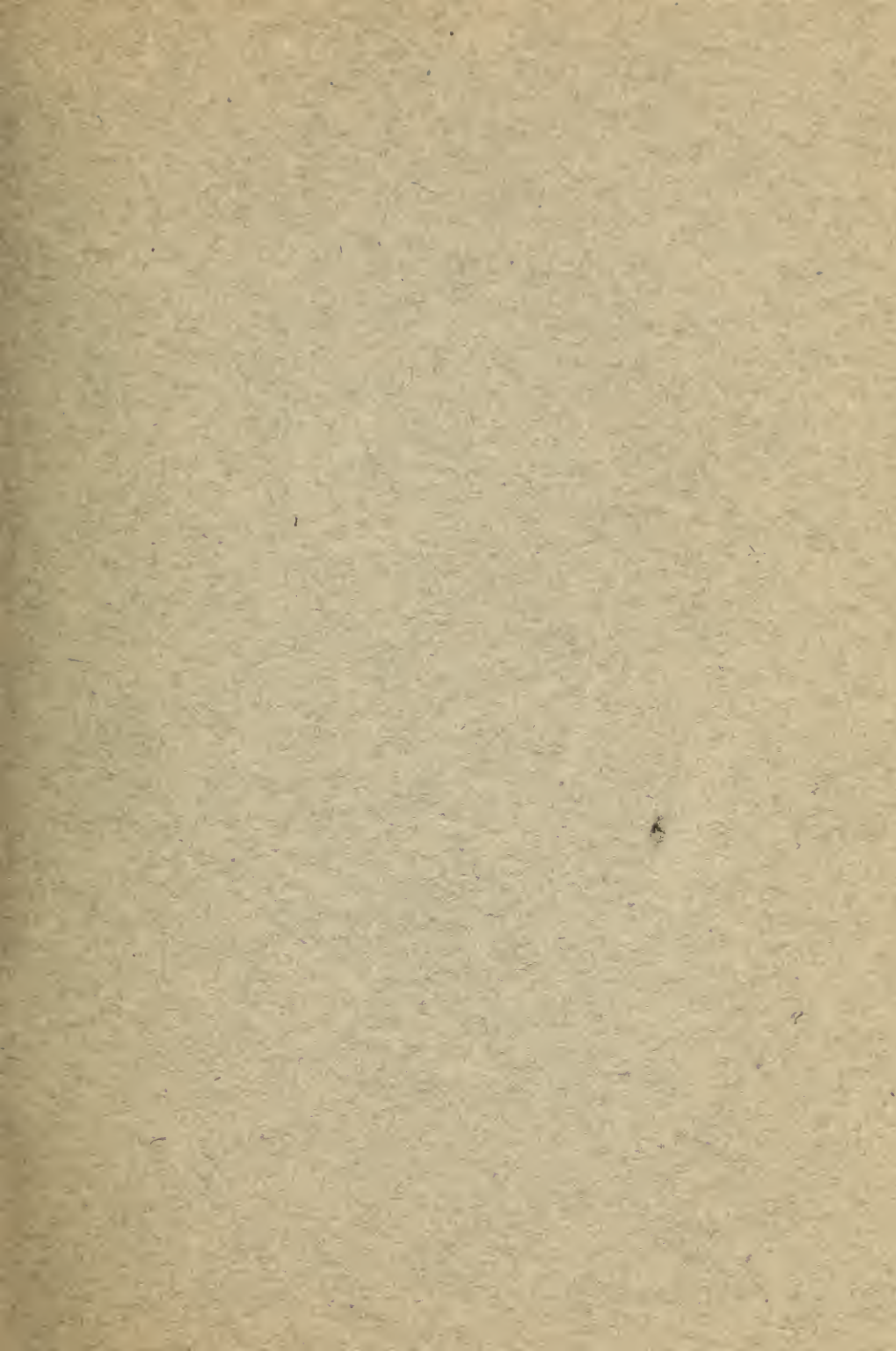
THE FOLLOWING IS THE ANALYSIS IN DETAIL:

- Introduction, giving Title and Authorship. i:1-8.
- I. A Vision of the Glorified Christ, who shows Himself as one having a constant care over His Church, and sends messages to 7 Churches (=Dioceses) in the Roman Province of Asia. i: 9—iii: end.
- II. A Vision of the Glory of God, the Blessed Trinity, in Heaven, showing also a Book with 7 Seals, implying that the story of man's redemption cannot be read and understood till the Church has passed through 7 experiences of trial here indicated. iv: 1—viii: 1.
- III. A Vision of 7 Trumpets, showing how God really answers the prayers of good men for the punishment of sin. viii: 2—xi: end.
- IV. A Vision of the Age-long Conflict of the Church with Satan and with two great Evil Powers that Satan raises up. xii: 1—xiv: end.
- V. A Vision of 7 Bowls, showing how the consequences of sin will be made more and more intolerable in the last times. xv: 1—xvi: end.

- VI. A Vision showing what the Church corrupted by the world will come to in the last days, both in sin and in penalty. . . . xvii: 1—xix: 10.
- VII. A Vision of the Coming of our Lord to Judgment, including the story of a reign of blessedness followed by one final breaking forth of evil, and then a sudden and final triumph of good. . . . xix: 11—xxi: 8.
- VIII. A Vision of a New World and a New Lifexxi: 9—xxii: 9.
- Conclusion, with warning of the seriousness of this message, and prayer for speedy consummation of this hope.xxii: 10-end.

To beginners in the study of the Revelation, looking for a short and inexpensive Commentary, the volume, "*The Revelation*," by Bp. W. Boyd Carpenter, from the "*Commentary for Schools*," published by Cassell and Co., may be recommended somewhat particularly. The book is a 12mo., and the English price is three shillings.

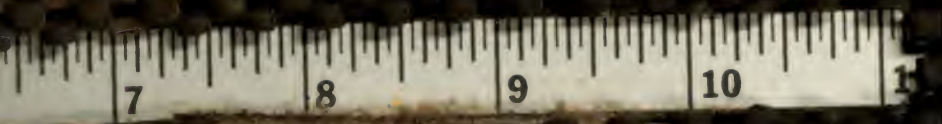




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